

FORERUNNERS TO MODERN
COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS
IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL WORK:

Religious Prophets, Adult Educators,
and Labor Organizers as Agents
of Fundamental Social Change

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is about the historical development of social roles that may be thought of as forerunners or precursors to modern community organization (CO) practice in the field of social work. Three separate CO-related roles, arising from three different institutional bases, are explored as illustrations of antecedent forms of purposeful socio-cultural change. The three roles are the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, from approximately 850 to 500 BCE; modern, liberal adult educators involved in community development in England and the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries; and labor organizers of the early 1900s. No attempt has been made to demonstrate continuity between the three roles.

One of the ongoing themes that emerges in examining precursors to modern CO practice is the range of motivations of change agents to act on behalf of the social welfare—the sources of energy sustaining their activities. As a part of the question of motivation, a second but no less important recurring theme is the conflict—experienced by people seeking fundamental change—between the dictates of conscience and those of law and social custom.

Another theme related to those already mentioned and that deserves attention, if not respect and empathy, has to do with the personal consequences experienced by people dedicated to radical social change: physical abuse and emotional anguish are commonplace, and material rewards and comforts are rare. The varying degrees and kinds of social status accorded (or denied) those seeking change are strikingly different against the three historical and institutional backdrops.

Although comparisons are not made, a principal concern here is the scenario presented by each historical period: the participants and dynamic processes involved, especially the stakes held by people favoring the status quo and the methodologies employed by people seeking change. The central focus is on the agent of change, the practitioner, in contrast to institutional forces, acknowledging of course the overlap and interaction between the two.

THE PROPHETS OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

The great prophets, from Elijah—through Amos and Hosea—to Zephaniah, were among the Hebrew people for approximately 350 years. It's difficult to make generalizations about these men, as if they were not vastly different and unique individuals. It's also a problem to analyze them from such a great distance in time. To minimize the time-distance, attention is given to Jesus' role from the perspective that it was a culminating point in the development of this particular role-methodology configuration. This section relies exclusively on secondary source materials. Much of the viewpoint dealing with tactical approaches originates with *The Power Tactics of Jesus Christ* by Jay Haley.

The eighth century [BCE] in Israel was one of peace and prosperity, “. . . a period of magnificent ease . . .” (Sachar 1967:63). But at the same time the middle and lower classes were economically exploited—many people had lost their property to a powerful wealthy class. Members of the upper class were respectable, self-righteous, and self-servingly patriotic. Sachar (1967:62) suggests that the prophets arose “. . . out of the mire of Hebrew political life. . . .” They came to the fore in a period of disintegrating moral

order. Their predecessors were the seers, a recognized class of wise men who were consulted by people with problems and who “. . . received a fee for their professional services” (Peake 1922-23:234-235). The appellation of professional service refers to an ability to “. . . see what the ordinary man cannot see” (Peake 1922-23:234).

Genuine prophecy was not concerned with predictions or working charms, the kinds of activities often popularly associated with seers. In some respects it was directed toward more mundane social problems: for example, the tyrannical practices of Solomon, and Ahab's robbing Naboth and being chastised by Elijah (Sachar 1967:62). Nearly all of the literature describing the period connects the prophets with a search for social justice. Landman and Efron (1949:41) state that the Covenant Code, part of the Book of Exodus, seeks an end to interest charges on loans to the poor, an end to foreclosing mortgages on land, and the freeing of persons—after six years—enslaved for debts. The broadest objective, then, was social justice. On a different conceptual scale and much later in time, Ezekiel wanted Judeans and Israelites to be one people, one national group (Grayzel 1968:31-32). It's not difficult for the student of contemporary CO practice to understand the times in which the prophets arose and their objectives of social justice and national unity.

When the herdsman Amos went to the city he saw that common people were being denied justice in a period of great affluence. In fact, the poor did not have a practical means of judicial redress. The judges during the time of Jeroboam II (785-745 BCE) demanded bribes, which only the rich could afford (Landman and Efron 1949:35-36). The moral imperative that Amos stressed could not be met by attending temple services, but required social justice by and for all people. Like Amos, Hosea had a concept of God that spurred his conscience and gave form and energy to his campaign for social justice. For him God was a God of love with a “heart overflowing with sympathy” (Sachar 1967:68).

Sachar (1967:70) describes Micah as a “simple democrat.” He came from the lower class and was hostile to professional religious functionaries. Sachar (1967:70) suggests that Micah recapitulated the central themes set forth by Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah:

What does the Lord require of you
But to do justly, to love mercy
And to walk humbly with your God

Isaiah's view was that God demanded holiness, “. . . a spirit of consecration for the highest purposes, a sense of separation from what was common” (Sachar 1967:69). Those who could meet this test would comprise a “spiritual aristocracy” that would be the “saving remnant” of the Hebrew people. The “remnant” is the keystone of Jewish cultural longevity.

What we are addressing here is the character of the moral imperative underpinning the actions of the prophets. We can be reasonably sure that they believed that all of the consequences visited upon the earth were at God's hand. Yet we don't entirely illuminate the matter by stating that what they did was “right” and what made it so was God's command. The literature suggests that from the perspective of a prophet, the divine command was as much a matter of tactical necessity in approaching the people, as it was a driving force of personal conviction. They were, after all, men as well as religious prophets—yet we need not deny the inseparable connection between their perception of a divine will and their mundane activity.

The proportion of illiterates in ancient Israel was small and “. . . it was nothing unusual for an ordinary village boy to be able to read and write” (Roth 1953:46). Margolis (1953:94) refers to “. . . a new literary product (which) sprang up, books no longer about the prophets, but by the prophets, arranged by them selves or under their immediate supervision.”

What kind of men were the prophets? Sachar (1967:61) makes several generalizations about them:

- Supreme individualists, preaching restraint and conformity to the law
- Intensely patriotic, yet upbraiding the nation and threatening destruction
- Innately religious, yet despising the forms that religion took
- Eternal rebels, self-appointed, defying kings, priests, and the people

In many ways Jeremiah’s life typifies the social status accorded to the prophets and the personal consequences they suffered for their beliefs and actions. Sachar (1967:72) describes Jeremiah’s career as “. . . one of the epics of history” and compares him with Lao-Tse and Confucius. He was a gentle and sensitive man torn by inner conflict: his desire for warmth and a home life ultimately gave way to an ambition to alter the quality of the national character. He is referred to as the “solitary Jeremiah”—he spent much of his time alone, a pacifist marked as a traitor, finally imprisoned. His sensitivity and self-awareness were important parts of his unique religious beliefs (Sachar 1967:72).

Jeremiah was expelled from Anathoth following his first public appearance. He traveled to Jerusalem and joined Zephaniah. He became a key figure in the life of the country after Egypt’s attack, which was followed by the Babylonian invasion. Jeremiah’s belief that Judah should not form alliances to break free from Babylon caused him to suffer the worst forms of social ostracism. Jeremiah was physically abused to the point of being put into stocks, and Sachar (1967:75) maintains Jeremiah would have been executed but for the fear of killing a prophet. Jeremiah warned of the downfall of the country if the king continued in his efforts to be free of Babylonian rule. With Jerusalem attempting to hold out against a second Babylonian assault, Jeremiah continued denouncing the defenders. He was starved, beaten, and thrown into a cistern, but “He would not be loyal to a state that was not worthy of loyalty” (Sachar 1967:75). Nebuchadnezzar overran Jerusalem, the Babylonian exile began, and Jeremiah fled to Egypt, later to be stoned to death—preaching to his people.

When Jesus appeared in public it was as a religious prophet (Haley 1972:32). Although Jesus lived more than 500 years after the great prophets, much of what we know of Jesus as a prophet may also be true in some measure of the prophets who came before him. They were, after all, of the same genre. Haley (1972:32) points out that “Although an unknown cannot easily become known, Jesus was able to bring himself to the attention of the populace by using a popular tradition. People would listen to, and respect, wandering religious speakers who spoke in the streets.” The tradition of wandering religious men preceded the great prophets of earlier times, and they too probably enjoyed a degree of institutionalized social acceptance as change agents. Haley (1972:38) also suggests that Jesus used the tactic of audacious personal attack on more powerful opponents as a means of becoming better known. It has already been mentioned that the prophets engaged in this kind of behavior. A contemporary example of the successful use of this tactic occurred when Robert Welch of the John Birch Society accused the late President Eisenhower of being an agent of the communist conspiracy (Haley 1972:38).

There is at least one further similarity between Jesus and the prophets: they sought power, not through position in the established order, but by influencing large numbers of people who could in turn effect both personal and institutional changes.

What effects did the prophets have? In their own lifetimes “They became a model for all rebels who placed national and individual life on a moral basis, holding conscience higher than law” (Sachar 1967:75). Landman and Efron (1949:41) suggest that, “For the first time in human history, religion and ethics (the principles for the decent treatment of others) were becoming identified with one another.” Religious worship was taking on a new meaning: there was less *quid pro quo*, devotion for favor; and more understanding that to live in accord with the divine will it was necessary to observe certain rules of conduct in human relationships—because the order and peace of society depended upon it. In broader historical terms, the survivors of Judah—unlike the Israelites and many other peoples since—did not lose their identity after the destruction of their nation. It’s the consensus of modern historians that they were “revitalized . . . made into a new kind of people” as a result of the quest for social justice by the great prophets (Landman and Efron 1949:41).

The prophets arose in a period of social inequality and worked for fundamental change to bring about social justice. Most were men who came from the lower classes and were spurred on by their experiences and a sense of conscience that derived from their perceptions of a divine will. They were rebels who worked outside of the established order. They had no alliances beyond those that were spiritual and other-worldly, and they were abused and vilified by virtually every segment of society. Their methods included charismatic leadership, public advocacy, and pamphleteering; and their tactical approaches may have included calculated audacious attacks on the powerful entrenched classes. In their lifetimes they were models for purposeful social change, and it is suggested that the cultural survival and longevity of the Jewish people is to their credit.

ADULT EDUCATORS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Although adult education in the United States can be traced to early colonial beginnings, the movement gained major momentum after taking hold in England during the early- to mid-1800’s. This section, then, begins by examining the development of general forms of adult education in England in the early 1800’s, and then moves to a more particular aspect of the movement, community development, in the United States during the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. If the range of available literature, especially historical surveys, accurately reflects the period, only very small portions of the resources and energy of the adult education movement were directed toward community development—and this small effort was stillborn. Nonetheless, it’s worthwhile to consider the contributions of this short-lived branch of adult education as a precursor to contemporary community organization practice.

Axford (1961:346) cites Peers in support of the idea that the adult education movement grew out of the “dissolution of the old social order in England and the drift of population to the towns.” During the period we are considering, 75 percent of the population in England was of the working class, residing in densely populated areas (Harrison 1963:8). Harrison (1963:9) quotes an official source which describes well the social conditions extant in industrial towns during the early- to mid-1800’s: “. . . the Statistical Committee of Leeds town council found 34 houses occupied by 340 people, or 10 to eve-

ry house. The number of rooms in these houses was about 57, making an average of about six persons to each room. . . . There were only three out offices [latrines], from one of which, 75 cartloads of soil were removed by order of the Commissioners, and which was reported not to have been cleaned out since. There was no water within a quarter of a mile.” Epidemic diseases were endemic to working-class areas. The average age at death for “operatives, labourers, and their families” was 19—it was 44 for professionals, and 27 for tradesmen and farmers (Harrison 1963:11).

Although the beginnings of the English adult education movement were diverse, the corresponding societies of the 1790s were the principal forerunners. They sponsored large numbers of discussion groups that studied the writings of men such as Tom Paine and John Locke (Harrison 1963:101-102). The first adult school was dedicated at Nottingham in 1798. For Harrison (1963:xiii) the two educational institutions—corresponding (or mutual improvement) societies and adult schools—“. . . symbolized the ambivalent role of adult learning as alternatively a movement of protest and a means to promote social acceptance and harmony.” This ongoing theme in adult education becomes an important element in the impotence of attempts at substantive community development by adult educators.

In respect to the social problems of the 1800s, Harrison (1963:40) points out that the middle-class answer was to make everyone over in their image, a logical function of adult education by their lights: “These are not the people’s institutions, but rather instruments for shaping society according to the dominant middle-class views.” The mechanics’ institutes, which experienced their rise and decline from 1825 to 1875, were essentially a middle-class venture for working-class men. Control was almost exclusively in the hands of middle-class people. The Bradford Mechanics Institute which failed to get middle-class support, and put control in working-class members, was “. . . denounced by Churchmen and Dissenters alike as a hotbed of infidelity, and was shunned by the middle classes on account of the connexions of some of its leading members with the militant working-class movement” (Harrison 1963:61). The institutes taught conventional political economy. Open discussions on controversial political and economic subjects were banned (Harrison 1963:83).

Urban centers in the United States were also experiencing rapid growth during the early 1800s, and the industrial revolution was gaining momentum. Adult education in the United States had its early beginnings during the colonial period. It was primarily a vocational curriculum conducted during the evening hours. Lyceums, small self-improvement associations, were formed by farmers and mechanics for “. . . instruction in speech, debate, and discussion of common public interests”—and they numbered in the thousands by the 1850s (Axford 1961:348). Counted among the participants were Henry Ward Beecher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Horace Greeley, Frederick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln (Axford 1961:348). The lyceums declined toward the end of the 19th century. They were followed by several other forms of publicly supported adult education, most notably the university extension with beginnings in the late 1800s.

Ruth Kotinsky’s *Adult Education and the Social Scene* (1933) provides an excellent retrospective statement of the ideological and philosophical underpinnings of the community development branch of adult education. Writing in 1933, she reminds readers that the country has “. . . failed in the distribution of wealth, in the elimination of causes of distress . . . , and in the establishment of worthy conditions for everyday living” (Kotinsky 1933:xiv). In his forward to *Adult Education and the Social Scene*, William Kilpatrick (Kotinsky 1933:vii) described adult education as “. . . the conscious and organized

effort to help the people study their problems and meet their needs.” Kotinsky (1933:180) lends more weight to the professional cast: for her the adult educator serves “. . . to help persons to become conscious and good schemers of their own destinies without determining those destinies for them.”

What can be said of the objectives and purposes of adult education? Kotinsky (1933:28) pointed out that with a war just over and the country in economic crises, “If education is to be adult education, it had better concern itself with the things adults must learn to do, rather than with spelling, Spanish, or a dilettante’s acquaintance with the classics”; and “. . . it must be the business of adult education to see that those who do the productive work of the world become conscious of the responsibility to see that their work and its output redounds to the general happiness rather than to distress” (Kotinsky 1933:50).

The need to educate immigrants provided much of the energy of the American movement for adult education after the turn of the century. Kotinsky (1933:80) views the response to this need as one which reinforced the traditional view of adult education as “indoor” deliberations rather than “outdoor” action.

From the rhetoric of this social philosophy one might imagine the offspring to be revolutionary strategies and tactics, but in practice this was not the case. Incredible as it seems, the question of whether people should be “. . . given what they want or what . . . educators think is good for them . . .” was still unresolved by adult educators in the 1930’s (Kotinsky 1933:147). And while the social philosophy was activist, the methods were traditionally institutional. The role of the adult educator was to work with indigenous community groups such as service clubs to help them become “. . . more conscious of their total possibilities, and more effective as constructive, planning social agencies” (Kotinsky 1933:108). Fansler (1934:61-62) provides more detailed descriptions of the methodologies of working with groups. He defines the role of the leader as being manipulative, assuming responsibility for directing the meeting in terms of a preconceived, unshared end goal. Fansler (1934:63) points out also that this “. . . method, is of course, an excellent vehicle for indoctrination of all kinds.” For Kotinsky the role of the adult educator begins with knowledge of the people with whom he is working, having substantive relationships with them. She rejects as inadequate preparation, academic study alone; she views as crucial an understanding of the fundamental values of life, not black and white rules, but successful life experiences, a “realization of [their] . . . implications, a desire to make [them] . . . prevail, and a tentative technique for bringing [them] . . . into being” for others (Kotinsky 1933:190). In contrast to Fansler, Kotinsky (1933: 177) states: “The participants themselves are a part of the stage. They cannot gain education, control over their own destinies, any of the things they seek in life, without doing it for themselves. What the adult educator does for them is so much to the bad, controlling life for what he thinks is good, gaining through his activities what he thinks is desirable and educative, robbing the true participants of what they could learn of method and gain of insight and responsibility through their own doing.”

Kotinsky had raised the subject of conflict methods in 1933, but quickly dismissed them as a narrow part of the methodological spectrum. At a 1936 Swarthmore conference, the participants, seeking to develop a handbook “. . . helpful to persons engaged in enterprises of adult education” (Brown 1936: 36), barely got beyond “. . . the need for self-expression of each individual and . . . the . . . education of all in the democratic process . . .” (1936:15). On the issue of confrontation with authority the position of the conference was that “The new education will teach that in most circumstances consti-

tuted authority should be obeyed, no matter how unreasonable, but that all unreasonable require meets should be gradually and tactfully resisted”—and that was the total position.

One may well ask if anything at all in the way of action came from this outpouring of social philosophy. Although undoubtedly there were others, the literature seems limited to two case study monographs, the Chester County (Pennsylvania) project and the Greenville County (South Carolina) project; and a work on *Educational Experiments in Social Settlements* (Hawkins 1937). The Chester County project was an attempt to use adult education to develop and implement a social plan at the county level. It resulted in a Health and Welfare Council comprised of professionals or representatives of service programs and agencies, not representatives of the indigenous population. The project spun off numerous services such as workshops, public debates, and a speakers' bureau. (Herring 1933.)

The Greenville County project also resulted in the formation of a council and was responsible for a number of spin-offs. Like the Chester County project, the key participants were professionals and service representatives. The functioning of a 16-person “committee on commerce and government” appointed by the Executive Committee of the Council gives some insight into the project (Brunner 1942:85). Recognized community leaders or those who held positions in the power structure were selected for the committee. At the time of formation there were no tasks for the committee to act upon. Half of the members resigned during the first year. At the Executive Committee's urging to “. . . make haste slowly. . . ,” the committee took little if any action.

The efforts of the Chester and Greenville County projects to implement a professionally based process of community development, as a part of adult education, were unsuccessful in terms of their own and the broader objectives of the movement. In a period racked by industry-labor confrontations and upheavals, the professional educators were terribly self-conscious about the use of power or confrontation tactics.

The value of examining educational experiments in social settlements seems doubtful. The experiments that Hawkins (1937) describes, having different antecedents, objectives, and philosophical underpinnings from the Chester and Greenville projects, are hardly comparable and therefore not considered here. The settlements also differed from adult education efforts at community development because the settlements had a tradition of “. . . civic agitation looking to reform” (Hawkins 1937:3).

In all of the literature surveyed there was only one reference to personal consequences for adult educators working through a process of community development to effect social change: “An individual working singly on this problem may have a lonely time” (Brown 1936:27). This is not unexpected, given professionals operating within an institutional framework.

What of the results of this branch of adult education? In her review of the adult education enterprises of the period, Kotinsky (1933:114) noted that “. . . not one large life influence molding the mind of a nation is included. The big economic factors are omitted, together with urban and rural conditions. . . .” “It has been found that though the fountain heads of the adult education movement in America were somewhat social in character and outlook, they tended rather toward the academic than the realistic treatment of these very factors which brought them about” (Kotinsky 1933:110-111). Nothing has occurred in the intervening years to contradict these statements. While most of the adult education projects expanded and enhanced the delivery of services, the original dream of facilitating fundamental social change was never realized.

We have seen that the adult education movement arose in England at the beginning of the 19th century when a large segment of the population were of the working class and living under intolerable conditions. Following closely the mutual improvement societies of the late 1700's, the mechanics' institutes were proposed largely to ensure the moral behavior of the people in the working classes. The institutes were governed by and served primarily the interests of the middle classes, devoid of controversy, and of little consequence by the 1860's. In America, following the decline of the lyceums in the late 19th century, adult education as a movement began to take hold, explained in part by the large number of immigrants who required education. Most of the people involved in adult education enterprises were middle-class professionals.

The community development branch of adult education sought to develop an activist approach to effect fundamental social change. At least two county level projects attempting to link community development with adult education were an outgrowth of this movement. They had some success in improving service delivery, but were of no consequence in effecting systemic change. As with the earlier writers who had laid the conceptual groundwork, the projects were self-conscious to the point of impotence about the use of conflict or power tactics.

LABOR ORGANIZERS AND LEADERS

This section views several of the major protagonists—organizers and leaders—of the American labor movement as precursors to modern CO practitioners. The focus is on their experiences as organizers rather than administrators. The principal sources used are biographical. In respect to their later years these major leaders cannot be viewed as typical organizers, yet all emerged from the rank and file and were part of the bootstrap operation in the American labor movement that occurred from the late 1800's until the 1930's.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to trace the beginnings of the American labor movement, except to say that it began with guilds and craft unions during colonial times and progressed to the development of a national organization by 1869. Because the national labor organizations provided a philosophical and methodological context for later events, they are briefly considered here.

The Noble Order of the Knights of Labor sought “the replacement of a competitive society by a cooperative one which would give workers the opportunity to enjoy fully the wealth they created” (Department of Labor 1957:11). They called for an eight-hour day, equal pay for equal work by women, abolition of convict and child labor, public ownership of utilities, and the establishment of cooperatives. The Knights of Labor saw strikes as a last resort; they placed most reliance on “. . . educational and political [legislative] methods rather than on collective bargaining” (Department of Labor 1957:11). The internal conflict that led to the decline of the Knights was between those leaders “. . . who favored processes of collective bargaining . . . [and] those committed to political means and basic social change” (Department of Labor 1957:12)—a conflict between pragmatists and idealists, between those concerned with achievements and others concerned with objectives. The organization was defunct by the beginning of World War I.

The American Federation of Labor (AFL) was beginning to take shape in the early 1880's. Unlike the Knights of Labor, the AFL was devoted to “pure and simple unionism”—higher wages and better working conditions (Department of Labor 1957:13). While the Knights of Labor and the AFL represented more conservative and moderate

labor viewpoints, the Socialist Labor Party and Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) represented more radical approaches. The IWW, organized at the turn of the century, was outlawed in several states and many of its leaders were sentenced to prison (Department of Labor 1957:18-19).

Many of the early attempts at mass organizing by industry rather than craft took place during the late 1800's and were marked by confrontation tactics and violence. The railroad strikes that began in Pittsburgh in 1877 and spread throughout the country involved riots, martial law, and many deaths (Department of Labor 1957:9). The American Railway Union strike against Pullman, led by Eugene Debs, in 1894, resulted in 25 deaths; and the unsuccessful struggle of the Iron and Steel Workers against Carnegie Steel at Homestead, Pennsylvania, in 1892, resulted in 10 deaths before the National Guard moved in (Department of Labor 1957:15). Although the results of labor organizing tactics can be characterized as involving substantial confrontation and violence, the movement has never immobilized or undermined its activist approach—nor limited its options to act—by defining confrontation or the lack of it as the key tactical issue. As a tactic, confrontation—with the potential of conflict—was viewed as one among many tactics that may be more or less appropriate, more or less successful in a given situation.

The rise of professional labor organizers can be traced to employers' attempts to undermine organizing efforts through "blacklisting." Brooks (1971:87) describes the blacklisting process: "Employers' associations undertook to supply to their members the names of workers who had shown interest in the unions. Extensive blacklists of such union workers were developed, so that the names would be passed from one employer to another. A discharged worker known or suspected to be a union member often finds it impossible, because of the blacklist, to get another job in the same industry or even in the same town or city in another industry." "If the blacklist is to be effective and complete, employers must have some means of discovering which of their workers are in the unions. For this they have for many years used the labor or industrial spy" (Brooks 1971:87). After the Haymarket bomb exploded in 1886, the public reaction was that terrorists dominated organized labor, and employers sent undercover agents into the factories to identify labor leaders. To circumvent blacklisting, the unions opted to hire employees whose sole job would be organizing and who ". . . would not be dependent upon the employers for their bread and butter" (Minton and Stuart 1937:37). In time, as the need for organizing diminished and the unions became established, they became known as the business agents.

The business agents were often given nearly unlimited power to bargain and negotiate with employers, and to call strikes without consulting the membership: "Brawn and fearlessness became the required attributes of the walking delegates" (Minton and Stuart 1937:37). Minton and Stuart (1937:38-39) suggest that the power and absence of effective supervision resulted in widespread abuses by the agents: The corruption of "business unionism" was largely an outgrowth of the agents' power to call strikes. The agents' ability to blackmail employers ultimately produced "profitable alliances" between employers and agents—conspiracies to squeeze out competition while simultaneously ensuring the absence of labor trouble for the employer. And "By the middle of the 1890's the construction industry in most large American cities was infiltrated with racketeering alliances."

The functional distinction between organizers and leaders became blurred with time, except to the extent that they represented different levels of the labor organization

hierarchy—the days of voluntary leadership having since passed, both are paid employees. Although successful labor leaders are not typical of labor organizers, they provide a means of viewing the widest range of involvement in union organizing activity, from picketing through organizing, to nationally visible leadership. Caesar Chavez is a contemporary example of this phenomenon. In most cases the union leader not only emerged from the rank and file, but also has lifetime longevity in the particular union he heads. The exceptions, men who have moved horizontally, usually involved the executive councils of the AFL or CIO (Committee for Industrial Organization) before their merger.

In 1925 William Green was named as successor to Samuel Gompers as president of the AFL. His father had been a miner and the younger Green began working in the mines full-time at 16. He was a conservative young man who “. . . preferred teaching Sunday school . . . to wrangling about the class struggle and ways to change the world” (Minton and Stuart 1937:6). In 1900, at 27, he landed his first job as a union official, elected sub-district president of the United Mine Workers (UMW). In time he was elected as a pro-labor moderate to the Ohio Senate (Minton and Stuart 1937:8). Green found that “. . . with patience and by avoiding open conflict which too often brought enemies, he could get ahead” (Minton and Stuart 1937:8). Green was quoted in 1935 as saying, “. . . the majority of employers sincerely and honestly wish to maintain decent wage standards and human conditions of employment. They neither seek the exploitation of labor nor the exploitation of the consuming public. They are inspired by a keen sense of justice and are influenced in all their business dealings by a spirit of fair-dealing and fair-play” (Minton and Stuart 1937:17). Green firmly followed the lead of his predecessor Samuel Gompers. His commitment to reasonableness at the expense of results left him sounding like “. . . a cautious social worker. . . . [because] he neglected to back his program with any suggestion as to how it could be achieved . . .” (Minton and Stuart 1937:19). Minton and Stuart (1937:17) quote Green as stating that the right to strike “. . . involves so many considerations that it ought to be utilized only as a last resort”—but during his 12 years as AFL president, from 1925-1937, he never conceded that conditions warranted a strike. During his tenure, Green overlooked widespread corruption, and was himself—at the least—insensitive in making large loans, through a bank he controlled, to executive officers of the anti-labor Hearst newspapers (Minton and Stuart 1937:18-22).

William Hutcheson was born in 1874. He joined the carpenters union in 1902 and four years later, at 32, became business agent. He had the physical stature and mental temperament to practice the “. . . plug ugly tactics of business unionism” (Minton and Stuart 1937:35). At 39 he was elected head of the brotherhood that invested in him nearly unlimited power to direct the business and activities of the organization. In what Minton and Stuart (1937:36) view as a quest for power, Hutcheson became labor advisor to Hoover in the 1932 presidential campaign—they describe his guiding principle as expediency: he associated with gangsters and used union funds for his own interests.

John L. Lewis was born in 1880 in Iowa and went to work in the mines at 12. His father was an immigrant miner, a member of the Knights of Labor, who was blacklisted. As a young man John L. traveled around the country working as a miner, took part in strikes, and helped dig out 400 miners killed in an explosion in 1905 at Hannah, Wyoming. In 1906 he returned to Iowa and was elected delegate to the UMW convention; in 1909 he moved to the coal fields in Illinois and was elected president of the Panama lo-

cal; and finally he got himself the position of state legislative agent for the union. (Minton and Stuart 1937:86-89.)

Shortly before World War I Lewis became an organizer for the AFL. He became acquainted with workers' problems not by studying them but by developing relationships with them: ". . . as a young man, his cutting up helped him learn to know people. He got to understand them by working with them, fighting with them, and playing with them" (Sulzberger 1938:29-30).

In his early years as a union leader, Lewis followed the conciliatory tradition of Gompers, but he finally began to support progressive legislative programs and a large-scale effort to organize industrial unions. Undermined in the latter objective by an AFL executive council controlled by craft unions, Lewis sought to influence the 1935 Atlantic City convention: ". . . he utilized all the tricks of oratory he knew so well; now cajoling, now flattering, now defiant. He clinched each paragraph with clear logic, and from beneath the well known histrionics rang a passionate conviction . . ." (Minton and Stuart 1937:103). A week later, unsupported by the convention delegates, he formed—with seven other presidents of AFL unions—the Committee for Industrial Organization (Minton and Stuart 1937:104).

In addition to being organizer, leader, and advocate, Lewis was also a labor educator: In the late 1930's the CIO faced the problem of ". . . how to retain its members, not how to enlist them" (Sulzberger 1938:121). Lewis responded by promoting the idea that it is ". . . the right of every man and woman to have a job . . ." (Sulzberger 1938:123). And ". . . because a man is underpaid his child has more chance of dying . . ." (Sulzberger 1938:125). This was neither rhetoric nor advocacy directed beyond the CIO, but an educational appeal to the self-interest of inactive members.

In 1936, allied with a more progressive element than ever before, Lewis initiated the drive to organize steelworkers. The campaign to organize industrial unions spread to the auto industry and the sit-down strike was successfully used. It was the first time that a national labor organization—the CIO—supported the strike of an affiliate ". . . and became the determining factor in the struggle" (Minton and Stuart 1937:109). The consequences of these drives for labor organizers were reflected in the tactics used by the corporations: they included ". . . espionage, intimidation, reactionary legislation, Red-baiting, [and] vigilante terror . . ." (Minton and Stuart 1937:111). Only two years after the formation of the CIO the ". . . signals of a fresh offensive . . . were reflected in the Memorial Day massacre of Republic Steel pickets . . . [and] the attack by Ford's 'service men' on auto organizers . . ." (Minton and Stuart 1937:111).

Sulzberger (1938:11) describes Lewis' greatest victories as being based on his skills as a negotiator around the conference table. He had an uncanny ability at "close-quarters suasion," a sort of intimate advocacy where he would call up the specter of ". . . a crust of bread . . . for my people" (Sulzberger 1938; 7-9). For Sulzberger (1938:14-15), Lewis ". . . conceals a fount of kindness and Welsh mysticism. It is not impossible to see tears cloud his blue-green eyes when he is truly moved." "His capabilities for affection are enormous. He has a bond of sympathy for the unfortunate" (Sulzberger 1938:15). Yet withal, it was John L. Lewis who wrote in a letter, "My greatest error was to believe too long that the innate fairness and sense of humor of the leaders of finance and industry would cause them to voluntarily work with labor for the solution of our great economic questions and problems of industrial relationship" (Minton and Stuart 1937:161).

It is suggested here that the energy for doing good, acting on behalf of the social welfare, need not spring from moral considerations. It may derive from life experience

that can, as the range of union leaders confirms, brutalize as well as lovingly endow. For men who worked in the labor movement to organize workers, it was not a case of doing “for them” but “with us”—and self-concern requires no moral imperative.

Harry Bridges began his labor career on a picket line in New Orleans and by the end of the strike he was in charge of picketing. When he went to work in San Francisco, company-run unions controlled the docks, and anyone who challenged them faced the threat of blacklisting. He lost his job after complaining of short pay to a company union delegate. (Minton and Stuart 1937: 176-178.) In terms of basic objectives, Bridges articulated the most fundamental of goals related to effecting social change: “The main issue is the right of labor to organize” (Minton and Stuart 1937:189). To advocate such a right suggests recognition that there are inherent class antagonisms and that the objective of effective organization is the development of a new power base founded on the common self-interest of large numbers.

In 1919 and several times in the 1920's unsuccessful attempts were made to organize a local of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) in San Francisco. Another attempt was made in 1932 when conditions for dockworkers were at an all-time low (Minton and Stuart 1937:181). Under Bridges' leadership, the process of creating “agitation” for a union was stepped up and received support from sympathetic maritime unions; and within six weeks the majority of longshoremen had deserted the company union for the ILA (Minton and Stuart 1937:181).

During the 1934 strike of Pacific Coast maritime unions, with the strikers holding strong and “. . . Hearst leading, the press attacked Bridges as a communist and alien, and demanded his arrest and deportation. The police harassed the picket lines, jailed militants, slugged, beat, terrorized” (Minton and Stuart 1937: 185). “On July 5, ‘Bloody Thursday,’ the police charged the workers’ lines, gassed pickets, shot into the ranks of unarmed men. Over one hundred fell wounded, two men lay dead” (Minton and Stuart 1937:186). What followed was a public funeral which led to “. . . the first general strike in America in fifteen years . . .” (Minton and Stuart 1937:187).

Bridges comes closer than other well-known labor figures to combining the attributes of organizer and leader. Minton and Stuart (1937) write at length of Bridges’ commitment to developing democratic processes within the longshoremen's union, but they also quote him in the role of a leader: “I speak for the men, I act and talk as they want me to” (1937:192).

Sidney Hillman had served 10 months in jail in his native Russia for organizing and political action before he was 21 (Soule 1939:10). At 22 he became an apprentice cutter for Hart, Schaffner, and Marx in Chicago. The conditions for garment workers at the turn of the century are legend, and in 1910 a spontaneous strike began at Hart, Schaffner, and Marx and engaged 35 thousand workers in three weeks. Hillman, opposed to the craft unionism and abuses of power of the United Garment Workers, sought the support of the central body of the AFL in Chicago. The cutters, leaders in the craft, designated Hillman as one of a committee to assist the other crafts in analyzing problems and making decisions. (Soule 1939:19-22.) Soule (1939:22) writes of Hillman's attributes: “He had opinions; he expressed them well; he was decisive and inspired confidence. If there was any action stirring, he naturally gravitated to the center of affairs. And even this early he knew the need of general organization which could bring order to the industry.”

Hillman's early role was not as a labor agitator but "... in the part he played in influencing the decisions of ... [the] excited and enthusiastic mass of workers" (Soule 1939:23). Hillman knew how to present and communicate an issue to arouse public sympathy. He convened citizens' committees to investigate working conditions and arranged for press coverage and wide circulation of their findings (Soule 1939:26). Soule (1939:54) suggests the reason Hillman was so highly regarded was that "... instead of imposing his own will on others he sensitively reflected the needs of the people, and that instead of trying to drive events, he perceived the logic inherent in the situation and worked it out in action."

Soule (1939:213-214) describes Hillman's skills and personal style as a negotiator: He assumed that if there's a conference between two sides, common grounds for agreement exist. Hillman admonished his associates to remember that in negotiations adversaries "... will fight for words when in terms of reality they would be willing to make concessions. There is no use in arguing about the formulas and words. That is meaningless and makes everybody stubborn. Let them have their formulas and take real concessions in exchange." For Soule (1939:227), Hillman "... is unusually sensitive to emotional values and the subtleties of human personality. ... His friendships are warm."

By the late 1930's the results of union organizing activity were apparent. The American labor movement had successfully obtained state legislation regulating the conditions under which women and children could be employed in industry, and protection against industrial hazards. Workers' compensation laws were enacted in most states. And after a series of legislative acts had major pro-labor features invalidated by the courts, the Magna Charta of labor legislation—the Wagner Act—was passed. At the same time the movement enjoyed monumental successes in forming industrial unions and obtaining major concessions in wages and benefits. The activity of the previous 50 years of labor organizing had resulted in substantive social change, a qualitative improvement in the social welfare.

The American labor movement began with craft unions in colonial times and grew to national organizations by the late 1800's. Many of the early attempts at organizing industrial unions resulted in violence, but this never became a key tactical issue in organizing efforts. In response to blacklisting and labor spies, the unions engaged full-time organizers who later became business agents. The power of the agents ultimately led to widespread corruption.

There is little functional distinction between union organizers and leaders. The key figures in the labor movement have demonstrated a wide range of personal motives, from narrow self-interest to unstinting commitment. Nearly all emerged from the rank and file to be elected to office. The personal attributes on which their successes were based were varied: Green compromised, Hutcheson was the tough "plug ugly," Lewis the orator, Bridges the agitator and builder of democratic process, and Hillman the analyst and negotiator. They relied on a lengthy catalog of methodologies: Lewis and Hillman placed high value on personal relationships. Bridges and Hillman especially had a grasp of issues and how to successfully develop and manipulate them; and they also embodied to a greater degree the organizer's sense of facilitating process rather than assuming responsibility through leadership. The movement as a whole understood the need for mutual support and organizational unity, and nearly every successful figure had at least nominal skills as a negotiator. At various times these men took the part of organizers, charismatic leaders, educators, advocates, administrators, negotiators, and program formulators.

It is suggested that their energy to work on behalf of the social welfare arose from their own life experiences. They were not professional organizers but professional union men, most with a lifetime commitment to the place and craft or industry of their origins. Although nearly always focusing on specific objectives, they operated from a conceptual frame of reference that acknowledged inherent class antagonisms and the need to develop a power base grounded in large numbers of workers.

The American labor movement was successful in achieving legislative reform and in organizing major industrial unions. The results in increased wages and benefits have substantially improved the social welfare of millions of Americans.

CONCLUSIONS

To discuss precursors to contemporary CO practice in the field of social work it's necessary to define both precursors and modern CO practice. In the present context precursors are understood to be historical forerunners, although not in directly related lineage. Rather than attempt to demonstrate historical continuity, the purpose here is to call attention to early harbingers of present day practice, pointing out similarities and differences in motivations, objectives, roles and methods, results, and consequences for the people involved.

The task of defining contemporary CO practice is complicated because of the newness of this branch of social work. It wasn't until the 1960's that CO practice came into its own within the field of social work, ". . . no longer an adjunct to facilitate the provision of other direct services to clients, but rather to intervene in community processes for the purpose of facilitating fundamental institutional change" (*Encyclopedia of Social Work* 1971:1328). Especially of interest here is that aspect of CO practice defined as "community organization for social action" (*Encyclopedia of Social Work* 1971:1324). Within the field of social work there is considerable disagreement about what is appropriate to CO practice and who should be regarded as legitimate practitioners. The criterion used here to evaluate sources will not be possession of professional credentials, but recognition in the professional literature—notwithstanding that people and ideas treated in the literature are nonetheless controversial and far from being universally accepted within the field. In defining specific components of CO practice reliance has been placed on the *Encyclopedia of Social Work* (1971) and *Community Organizers and Social Planners* (1972).

Probably the most difficult area to assess and compare is the motivating force or source of energy for the person attempting to effect fundamental social change. We have seen that for the prophets, adult educators, and labor organizers, their perception of social conditions was an important factor in their action. The prophets, and possibly to a greater degree the labor organizers, personally experienced these conditions. The adult educators, mainly middle-class professionals, did not. As a practical matter, then, the prophets and labor organizers were working close to their own origins with people and problems well known to them. This was not true of the adult educators who sought to "do for" others with whom they had few experiences in common. Although the 1970's have seen graduate social work education made more accessible to people of economically and socially disadvantaged minorities, prior to this time enrollment was limited primarily to white, middle-class students. Generalizations are difficult and strained in this area; none-

theless, in terms of life experiences and motivations, contemporary CO practitioners are probably more closely related to adult educators than the prophets or labor organizers.

The prophets sought to effect fundamental change in three areas: social justice, a broadly stated objective which encompassed the notion of fairly distributing the society's benefits, especially economic and judicial benefits; morality, the impetus for social justice; and national unity. The adult educators also sought fundamental social change, but they were also concerned with developing an effective educational process in the community that could engage the mass of people in changing the conditions of their lives. For the most part, the men engaged in labor organizing had no explicit objectives for fundamental social change. Their goals were stated in narrower terms: they sought the right to organize, and higher wages and better working conditions.

Contemporary CO practice reflects the broadest formulation of objectives, from social justice through facilitating process to satisfying very specific problems. The broadest and narrowest of these goals are rarely stated in explicit terms—the focus most often is on facilitating process. For the modern organizer this involves action in the community which results in indigenous people coming together in response to issues and problems that concern them, leaders emerging, objectives being identified, strategies and tactics being developed, and action taken (Ecklein and Lauffer 1972:31-78).

The prophets were most notably agitators and charismatic leaders, yet they also functioned as advocates and even “program formulators” to the extent they proposed specific alternatives to existing social, economic, or judicial practices. The labor leaders were also noted for their charisma and skills as advocates, but their methodologies extended much further. They were successful in achieving objectives through bargaining and negotiation and, once having built an organization, they were able administrators. Several of them functioned to facilitate democratic processes among their memberships, yet they also took responsibility as leaders for analyzing problems and formulating programs. The adult educators, despite their profession, functioned more as facilitators, coordinators, and administrative staff than educators. They also took responsibility for analyzing problems and formulating programs. Their roles were, however, markedly different from those of the prophets and labor organizers: they shunned entirely the use of charismatic leadership and agitation as methodological tools. The CO practitioners in social work draw upon the broadest range of these precursory roles and methodologies. Charismatic leadership, while certainly not a trademark of the modern organizer, is not unknown (Ecklein and Lauffer 1972: 34-49). All of the other roles and methodologies discussed in respect to the prophets, educators, and labor organizers are associated with the newly developing professional practice (*Encyclopedia of Social Work* 1971:1332-1334).

What of personal consequences? For the prophets, the extreme was physical abuse, and rarely, loss of life. Social ostracism was commonplace. The life of an adult educator involved in community development seems to be much as we might expect of middle-class professionals today. The commonplace experiences for labor organizers were threats and occasionally instances of physical violence. Loss of life was not uncommon in the movement, and social ostracism and vilification were the rule. The most extreme consequences faced by the contemporary CO practitioner usually involve job loss and occasionally serving time in jail. Social ostracism is not uncommon, but physical abuse is rarely encountered. (Ecklein and Lauffer 1972:55-64, 81-100.)

No attempt is made here to analyze the “successes” of the prophets or labor movement, or the failure of adult educators in community development; but it seems use-

ful to point out some of the more salient factors involved. The contrast between adult educators, in terms of working within the realm of their own life experiences, and prophets and labor organizers is noteworthy. The degree of specificity or conceptual abstraction in framing objectives also distinguishes the labor movement from adult educators. While no proof can be offered that taking risks increases probabilities for success, the complete absence of risk-taking by the adult educators while engaged in a task as ambitious as seeking to effect fundamental social change would seem to have been a fatal methodological defect.

The prognosis for modern community organizers in the field of social work—whether they will be successful in facilitating fundamental social change—is uncertain. As this brief survey has indicated however, they have taken much of the best of their precursors.

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